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Weekend

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The Best of Both Worlds

by Fred Bruemmer

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THE TOWN of Repulse Bay huddles on the northwest corner of Hudson Bay. It has 265 people, mostly Eskimos. It also has spirit, a spirit that ensures it will not go the tragic way of those other Arctic towns to which the white man with his modern trappings has come, seen and conquered. The white man has come to Repulse Bay but he has found that this is one community which won't surrender to the tune of the popping of the caps of booze bottles; here, he has found a town and a people who will borrow some of his technology, yet only so they can adapt it to their use.

As you fly into Repulse Bay on the weekly DC-4 flight from Churchill, Manitoba, you sense the spirit of the town. Even from the air it looks like a thriving community. Repulse Bay now has 72 buildings, all, with the exception of those of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Roman

Catholic mission, built by the government since 1963. They include an Eskimo Co-op, a power station, workshops, garages, warehouses, a transient centre (the local "hotel", it charges \$35 a day — inflation's everywhere), community freezer, school, the older one-bedroom Eskimo houses, the newer three-bedroom houses (factory cost about \$12,000 but by the time they are shipped to Repulse Bay and put up, the total cost is near \$36,000), and the somewhat larger houses of the white residents.

When our plane touches down, we see what lies behind this outward appearance — the people. And they're what this story is about.

I went back to school at Repulse Bay to learn how the Eskimo is keeping his stamp upon the town and its surrounding region.

Twelve years ago, when I first travelled in the Canadian Arctic, the

educational philosophy was that the days of the hunter were over, and the best prospect for the natives' future lay in assimilating them as quickly as possible into the white man's society. The schools were regarded as the open sesame to this world. Children from remote regions were taken away from their families for 10 months each year and sent to boarding schools in the larger centres. The curriculum was patterned on that of the rural-urban society of southern Ontario, starting, in grade one, with Dick and Jane on the farm. In some schools, children were punished if they spoke their own language.

This scheme, according to Bryan Pearson, a member of the Northwest Territories Council, sadly resulted in "a generation of discontented Eskimos, a generation that forever lost its identity, not just as natives but as people".

Now, in a startling reversal, native values, interests, customs, ethics and skills are stressed in a school curriculum specially prepared for northern children. Some textbooks are written by Eskimos, and many are illustrated by Eskimo artists.

In Repulse Bay I watched Eskimo teacher Madeline Manitoik instruct kindergarten children and those in grades one and two in their own language, and teach them to read and write in Eskimo syllabics. Abraham Tagornak, a veteran hunter, showed the children "native skills".

This welcome trend in education is having its effect, as is evidenced by the response to the question: what sort of future do the children of Repulse Bay envisage for themselves?

"Really a continuation of the status quo," says Frank Gonda, the school principal. "They want to remain here, to become hunters or to

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

The Eskimos of Repulse Bay are wise in the ways of the white man, but happy to live the traditional way

Story and photographs by Fred Bruemmer



have local jobs. Above all, they don't want to leave the north, not even Repulse Bay."

I learned more about the spirit of Repulse Bay when the commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Stuart Hodgson, arrived for his annual visit. Hodgson has a fabulous memory for names and faces, and greeted the people with the easy joviality of long acquaintance. He is a big, burly man and the Eskimos like him. "Umingmak", they call him, the muskox.

Joe Krimmerdjuar, chairman of the eight-member community council, presided at the meeting. He is 24 and, as he has been living in Repulse Bay for only a year, it was a surprise when he was the winner over several other candidates in the recent council elections. He seems a wise choice. Raised partly in southern schools, he is wise in the ways of the white man, yet he is happiest

being a hunter.

The meeting began with a few polite speeches, and then quickly settled down to the nitty-gritty. The people wanted more and larger houses. They wanted a longer airstrip; they were already thinking of the time, not too far distant probably, when jets would land at Repulse Bay. The commissioner made notes, explained about his budget and the long "want lists" of all the other settlements, and promised help, within reason, or turned the problem over to Repulse Bay's energetic settlement manager, Claire Barnabe.

When the meeting was thrown open to questions from the floor, many minor complaints and grievances were aired, but the dominant theme of several speakers was: could the commissioner stop liquor from reaching Repulse Bay? It is the great fear. "It will destroy our young people!" one woman said.

Unlike so many other northern settlements, the liquor problem has barely touched Repulse Bay, for the simple reason that liquor is hard to come by. The nearest liquor store is in Churchill, and that's about 400 miles away, and to import liquor from there into the Northwest Territories involves a discouraging amount of paper work. But the Repulse Bay people are well aware of the ravages caused by alcohol in other regions, and they are afraid. For the last four years, the leading cause of death for native peoples in the Northwest Territories has been violence, suicide, accidents and poisoning, mostly connected with alcohol abuse. The people of Repulse Bay are determined that it won't happen here.

Repulse Bay, in the parlance of the north, is relatively "behind". Most of its men are still hunters, there is little welfare, no crime, no

resident policeman, no jail. Like alcohol, those aspects of progress have not yet arrived.

Nearly all the adults of Repulse Bay are employed, working for the government, the Hudson's Bay Company or the Eskimo Co-op, or as self-employed hunters-trappers-fishermen and carvers. Wages are fairly high. The school janitor earns \$10,000 a year, the bulldozer operator \$6.70 an hour. And a few of the best and most industrious carvers earn in the neighborhood of \$15,000 a year.

Most of the carvers are women and the favorite material is soapstone. The men haul it by snowmobile and sled in winter and spring from remote quarries, the same quarries their forebears used.

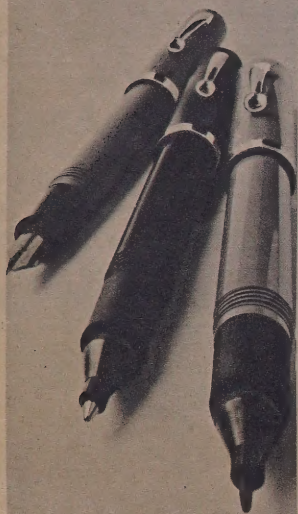
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Snowmobiles waiting, the Eskimos fish 100 miles from Repulse Bay.

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To the dismay of archeologists, Eskimos in Repulse Bay (and most other regions of the Arctic) also make many carvings of whale bones. They obtain the raw material from the ruins of their remote ancestors, the Thule culture people, once the master whalers of the Arctic. In Repulse Bay, most of the bone comes from a superb prehistoric site, consisting of 21 semi-subterranean Thule culture houses. Archeologists estimate they were built 700 or 800 years ago.

Ivory, too, is popular with the carvers, for the simple reason that it is popular with collectors and fetches high prices. But walrus, the hapless producers of ivory, have become rare in the Repulse Bay region. In 1973, only 10 were taken. Now the ivory comes from Japan. The protein-short Japanese are the world's most avid whale hunters, taking, among many other species, a lot of long-toothed killer whales. They eat the whales and sell their teeth to the Eskimos.

In return, the Japanese are the Eskimos' best customers for polar bear skins. It used to be the Americans, but it is now illegal to import products of marine mammals into the United States. However, in Japan, polar bear rugs have become a status symbol. In the spring of 1973, polar

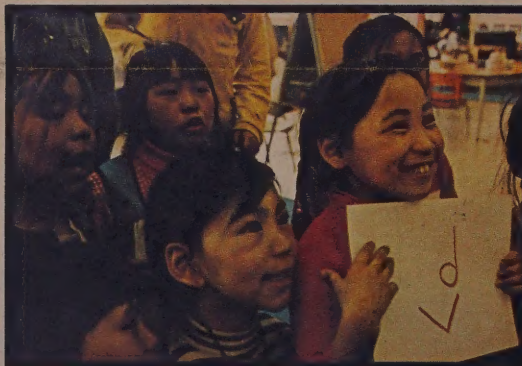
Economic jitters took the bloom off the bear boom

bear skins were selling in Tokyo for \$3,000 and up. The Repulse Bay hunters who, under a settlement quota system may kill 16 bears annually, were looking forward to another bonanza in 1974. Then came the Arab-Israeli war, and the subsequent oil embargo, the Japanese got the economic jitters, the yen slumped, and the bloom is off the bear boom. The Repulse Bay hunters will be lucky if they get an average price of \$1,000 per bear skin.

"Ten years ago, we thought we were lucky if we got \$100 for a polar bear skin," said Mark Tungilik. We sat in his spacious but sparsely furnished kitchen and drank tea. There was a washing machine, refrigerator, and range, a simple kitchen table and four chairs, and, on the wall, a telephone, a crucifix, a fire extinguisher, two holy pictures, and a clock. It hardly looked like the home of one of Canada's great artists. Yet Tungilik is exactly that. His carvings are the prized possession of many of the world's great museums.

Officially, Mark Tungilik is 61 years old. He himself is not sure when or exactly where he was born. "We did not count years when I was young," he said, "and our people travelled a lot." Until 12 years ago, he lived in a

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Top left: A far cry from the days of old—children learn to read Eskimo syllabics at the Repulse Bay school. Top right: A plane with provisions for the Co-op is unloaded. Left: Inukshuks, built centuries ago, scared migrating caribou toward ambushes. Above: The Sivanertoks stretch a wolf skin.



Beautiful Blue

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WARNING: The Department of National Health and Welfare advises that danger to health increases with amount smoked.

tent in summer, in a snowhouse in winter.

Until 1972, he had never been away from the Repulse Bay region. Then, in August, a message came, asking him to attend an exhibition of Inuit masterworks, including his own, at the Pushkin Gallery in Moscow. He flew from Repulse Bay to Churchill, Churchill to Winnipeg, Winnipeg to Montreal, Montreal to Moscow. He described the journey to me in exactly the terms he would use to describe a lengthy dogteam trip. "The sun was there," he said, pointing, "the same as when you travel to Igloodik."

In Moscow, he was introduced to Communist party secretary Leonid Brezhnev. At least he thinks it was Brezhnev. He isn't sure and, to be honest, he doesn't much care. He showed me a post card. "That is his home." He called it "ishumatan igloo", the boss's house. Igloo in Eskimo means "house", any house, including the Kremlin shown on the post card. I tried to find out more about his impressions, but the conversation bored him. Yes, it was interesting. But there were too many people, too many cars, too much noise, and, all in all, he was glad to be back in Repulse Bay.

A pot of seal meat simmered on the stove. I asked Tungilik about the seal, and his face instantly became animated, the eyes glistened behind the thick-lensed glasses. He is very short-sighted, but immensely proud and pleased that despite this handicap he can still hunt, still provide his family with seal meat.

As he talked enthusiastically about his latest successful hunt, I got the impression it meant more to him than all his fame as an artist. I wanted to tell him "you are a very famous artist" and rifled through my English-Eskimo dictionary in search of the right words. But it turns out the Eskimo language has no words for "fame" or "famous", "art" or "artist". It's as though the

Mechanized hunting is efficient but costs dearly

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Eskimo language has an in-built modesty, reflecting its users.

I wanted to go out with one of the hunters and council chairman Joe Krimmerdjuar kindly offered to help me. When I came to his house in the afternoon, he was still in bed. He'd been away hunting for two days and just got back that morning. "Two caribou and a wolf," he said, pleased. While he washed and made tea, I looked at the books on his crammed shelves: books on travel, on geography, on criminal law, many books about the north, and lots of novels.

Joe phoned several of the hunters. "Octave Sivanertok is leaving soon," he said. "He'll take you. Go and see him."

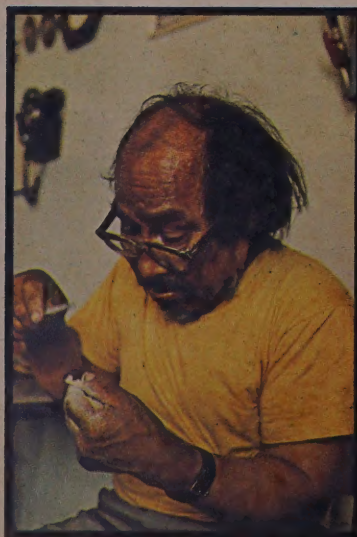
Sivanertok is chairman of the education advisory board. The place is worse than Bay Street. Every second person I met seemed to be a chairman, or at least on a board of directors. There are, to mention but a few, a settlement council, a housing association, a hunters and trappers association, a recreation committee, a co-op board of directors, a welfare committee and the education advisory board.

Sivanertok and his wife Christina Aaluk were busy in their kitchen

stretching a wolf pelt onto a drying board. It looked a bit incongruous in the modern furnished kitchen with its refrigerator, washing machine, range, and a shiny new bicycle in the corner. Sivanertok had damaged his snowmobile in running down the wolf, and it would take him a day to fix it. He'd call me on the telephone when he was ready to go.

All Repulse Bay hunters now have snowmobiles. In less than 10 years they have completely replaced the dogteams. The snowmobile is fast. In two hours, on good ice, it covers the distance a dogteam takes all day to travel. Hunters can patrol their traplines more frequently and have more time at home. Hunting trips are shorter and the fast machine is deadly efficient in running down certain types of game, like caribou, wolf or polar bear. A dogteam has to be fed, albeit scantily, when it is not working; the machine just stands there.

But mechanized hunting is costly; machine, gas and parts are a heavy drain on the hunter's meagre income. Sled dogs produce sled dogs without urging and at no cost. The hard-worked, ruthlessly driven snowmobiles rarely last more than a year in the Arctic, and a machine costs \$1,000 and up. A German scientist,



Top left and right: Protected by a snowblock windbreak, Octave Sivanertok fishes through the ice for lake trout. Far right: Charfishing with jig and metal lure, and three-pronged spears.

Above: Madeline Manitok with kindergarten pupils. Right: Carver Mark Tungilik at work. Centre: Snow plowing's nearly a year-round job.

who lived in Repulse Bay for five months last year, made a detailed snowmobile hunting cost study and total yearly expenses per hunter came to \$2,520, the price of 140 seal-skins! Add to this the cost of canoes for summer hunting, outboard motors, guns and ammunition, and the total outlay per hunter per year comes to \$3,430. To pay that, he must sell 190 seal skins. (Of course, the Eskimos are also paying for their snowmobiles with their hearing. The machines are deafening and among Eskimo adults, hearing loss is "roughly proportionate to the amount of hunting done and the distances travelled to the hunting ground" by snowmobile, reported Dr. James Baxter, chairman of Montreal McGill University's otolaryngology department, in a recent survey on hearing loss and ear disease among Eskimos.)

I detest the machines. Dogteam travel is slow, but fun. You perch chummily beside the driver on the sled. You chat and smoke. If you are tired, you snooze, lulled by the gentle pitching of the pliable sled. If you are cold, you jog alongside the sled for a while. The air is pure as chilled champagne, and all around you is the vastness and the silence of the north.

Being hauled on a sled attached with a long rope to a fast-travelling snowmobile is a lot less comfortable. The sled slews and you hang onto the ropes like a limpet. It pounds over the hard snow ridges (a \$100 sled used to last 20 years; now it's usually worn out in two) and a six-inch thick foam-rubber cushion is now a standard part of my Arctic travelling kit. You swallow exhaust fumes, worse than any city at rush hour. You hear nothing but the screeching of the machine and if you're in trouble, don't bother to holler, the driver can't hear you anyway.

The phone rang. It was Sivanertok. He's fixed the machine and was ready

to go. His travel rations were heavy on cookies and soft drinks. In terms of weight, soft drinks form the major "food" item brought into Repulse Bay. (A World Health Organization report states that of all the world's people, Alaska's Eskimos have the worst tooth decay. Canada's Eskimos, now that their diet, too, has drastically changed, are probably not far behind.)

We zoomed across Repulse Bay and then travelled overland, across rolling hills and along winding valleys. Sivanertok was taking up his traps. It'd been a top year. Prices were high and foxes were plentiful.

Inukshuks, roughly man-shaped stone cairns, lined the ridges of several hills. Built perhaps centuries ago, they scared the shortsighted, migrating caribou towards ambushes where Eskimo hunters were waiting for them with spears and bow and arrow.

Not long ago, the Repulse Co-op received a request for four inukshuks from an art dealer in the south. Amused but willing, business after all being business, the Eskimos built the inukshuks with slabs of frost-shattered rock near the village, numbered the stones with grease pencil, took Polaroid pictures, packed the stones in 45-gallon drums and sent them south by air freight, together with photographs and assembly instructions. The bill: \$1,000 per inukshuk, plus about another \$1,000 each for flying them south.

At 10 PM, the sun set and its slanting rays tinted the snow ridges golden and bronze. The wind picked up and the snow began to drift. Visibility was nearly nil. Sivanertok drove on, unerringly, through this infinite, roseate nothingness, guided by myriad vaguely-seen landmarks.

We stopped at midnight. The wind was strong and icy, too cold for tenting. Sivanertok found a good spot of suitable snow and built an igloo. Some months ago, he had shot and cached a caribou not far from here. He fetched it, while I lugged the caribou sleeping skins and our other gear into the igloo and made tea on the pressure stove. It had been a long day and we were famished. We hacked chunks of frozen, crunchy meat from the caribou carcass with the long snowknives, then cleaned the leg bones and split them to get out the rich, oily, vitamin-packed marrow. We drank tea and smoked, and talked about the caribou we had seen; the lake where we would go fishing tomorrow; about the inukshuks sold to the south. We were full of meat and nicely tired and relaxed. We snuggled into our sleeping bags and turned out the pressure stove.

The wind moaned and whistled around our snowhouse. We drifted off to sleep. ◀

Fred Bruemmer is Canada's foremost Arctic photographer.



This is the Bug between Russia and Poland.

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Vodka, orange
juice and cherry
brandy. Stir
well with ice.

With all due respect to their Russian neighbors, Polish people will tell you it was *they* who invented vodka in the first place. This was the bug between Russia and Poland. Clearly a question of whose national pride. So after our success with the Russians, we crossed the Bug River into Poland. The first person we met was a typical Polish fisherman. We poured him a typically Canadian drink: Alberta Vodka, orange juice and cherry brandy. He sipped, and quickly put the glass down. We poured him a glass of Alberta Vodka straight, instead. He drank it. Then he smiled. And nodded. When we pointed out the Alberta Vodka label, he laughed. Then asked for another taste. Proving to us once more that you don't need a Russian-sounding name to make a great vodka.

Alberta Pure Vodka: No wonder it's Canada's largest selling vodka at the popular price.

Photographed by Ralph Wallis on the Bug River, border between Russia and Poland.

A Man And His Conscience

Dr. Henry Morgentaler, abortionist:
"There is nothing that will ever
convince me this is a crime"

By Marq de Villiers / Photographs by Harold Whyte

IT IS A word that stirs fierce passions and partisan hatreds. It is a word that carries a heavy cargo of accusation and guilt. It is a word whose use whips up gusts to blow away reason. It is a word whose meaning Montreal doctor Henry Morgentaler has set out to change.

The word is . . . abortionist.

Watch: there is a demonstration. Two hundred and fifty people seething about the square. Raucous screams and rhythmic chants drown out the speakers on the makeshift platform. People with placards are bobbing up and down, trying to be seen by the cameras. Hold up that word as a mirror, and see the images reflected back. Show it to a small, breathless woman with a large placard. She is hysterical with rage. Her placard reads: Don't let him kill babies. The image she sees in the mirror is this: a gloved surgeon's hand dumping a perfectly-formed infant into a garbage bag. Hold up the word again. Show it to a woman wearing a small poster and a cold, cutting anger. Her poster reads: Drop all charges. No more victims. Free Dr. Morgentaler. The image she sees is this: a terrified, bewildered woman, oppressed by a callous bureaucracy, forced to accept mutilation and the risk of death at the hands of a back-alley quack.

The first woman is small and pink and white; a vein is throbbing in her temple from the force of her anger. She is shouting: He is the executioner of the unborn! How can he take it on himself to make decisions of life and death?

Dr. Morgentaler, in the eye of the storm, groans. She is wrong, quite wrong. It is absurd! She is accusing me — me! — of arbitrary decisions affecting life and death. His mind slips back to a time which is now only a grey and ghostly memory, and sees once again a picture that will stay with him for the rest of his life. He and his brother, part of a long line of Jews shuffling slowly into the death camp at Auschwitz. At the gate, a young Nazi soldier, bored and contemptuous, gesturing carelessly and thoughtlessly with his thumb. You, this way. You, that way. You, the healthy one, this way, to the work battalions. You, the scrawny one, that way, to the ovens. You, to live, you, to die. Of all people, thinks Morgentaler, my background sensitizes me to suffering, makes me hate these arbitrary decisions. Now I am accused. It is a charge that makes him very angry, but because he is a civilized and sophisticated man, he also appreciates the bitter irony of his position.

Dr. Morgentaler is an abortionist. And because he is an abortionist who refuses to pretend he is not, he has become a symbol. So his character, family life, income and motivations are all probed by the forces opposed to abortion. His compassion, gentleness and background as survivor of the holocaust are all advanced by those seeking abortion on demand. None of these things should be at

all relevant to the central issue (which is, of course, whether abortion is wrong), but they are introduced anyway.

The only thing most people can agree on is that Canada's abortion law is a bad law and should be changed. Under Section 251 of the Criminal Code, an abortion is illegal unless performed by a doctor in an accredited hospital, and then only after a committee of three other doctors says it's OK. Hospitals are not obliged to set up these therapeutic abortion committees, and in fact most have not done so.

It is, clearly, a ridiculous law, a shabby compromise, a moral cop-out, a bad, cowardly non-solution. If abortion is murder, as its extreme opponents claim, then it is a bizarre set of moral rules that permits murder on the say-so of three doctors (and patently unfair, also, to the medical profession). If abortion is not murder, then it is even more bizarre that there should be any legal or bureaucratic or medical interference with a woman's right to choose her own course.

* * *

Morgentaler, a small, trim figure with a rabbinical beard as neat and glossy as a beaver's rump, defended his position over a mid-morning breakfast of fried eggs and toast which he dissected and dispatched with precision and economy, as befits a fastidious medical man. [A few weeks after this interview, Morgentaler was sentenced to 18 months in jail for performing an illegal abortion.] He speaks with a flat, rather monotonous voice, even when impassioned, as he so clearly is by this issue.

"This is an issue where the right is all on the one side, the wrong all on the other," he insists. "It is not a question of contending moralities. We are for freedom of choice. I do not tell a woman whether to abort or not. No one should have this right. I am against coercion. I respect any woman's decision not to have an abortion. I am not pro-abortion and I don't know anyone who is. I am not pro-abortion any more than I am pro-appendectomy. Both are necessary procedures. I do not recruit women for abortions; desperate women come to me. I am a physician treating people who are in need. This is my responsibility."

He pauses, gestures for emphasis, delivers a line which became a major theme of his speeches to rallies and demonstrations before his sentencing: "Perhaps they should prosecute me if I ignored women's pleas for treatment. THAT would be contrary to medical ethics."

He pauses again, leans forward, polishes his plate with his toast. "It is an outrage that women are being denied access to proper medical facilities. A civilized society would recognize this. The law is unenforceable because women are desperate; it is forcing them into the hands of quacks. Women are being called criminals for committing no crime

but that of becoming pregnant. There are other unjust laws in Canada but there are none like this one which produces victims in immediate need, victims who cannot wait for legal redress."

Of the central thesis of his opponents, that abortion means the destruction of a person, Morgentaler is caustic. "It is arbitrary, non-scientific and absurd to believe in a 'person' at conception. Nothing in embryology supports this. It is a wrong premise, and if you work from a wrong premise you get wrong conclusions. If you accept this wrong premise, of course, then all accusations against me are possible, including that I am a Nazi butcher." A sardonic, humorless grin, accepting the irony.

The fetus, however, is a "potential" person?

True, says Morgentaler. "Potentially, every woman is capable of bearing 25 children. Perhaps it should be illegal not to have 25 children. After all, these are potential human beings, and a conscious decision is being made not to allow them being." Nature, as he points out, is wasteful — trillions of reproductive cells are never used.

Though Morgentaler himself believes in abortion up to "the point of viability", if he had his way there would never be expulsion of a recognizably human-shaped fetus. "At about seven weeks the fertilized egg is no larger than a fingernail. If women were allowed abortion on demand in the first few months of pregnancy, the question of when it becomes a person would just never arise. No woman would wait that long, since the danger after 12 weeks is four times as great. Therapeutic abortion committees in hospitals have a delaying effect, making abortion more dangerous than it should be."

Morgentaler considers the Canadian law on abortions arbitrary and unjust; and arbitrary authority is a subject on which he is unquestionably an expert.

He spent his early years in the Polish industrial city of Lodz, where he was doubly an outsider: once as a Jew in a city 99 percent Catholic, and again as the son of socialist parents in a Jewish community deeply conservative and religious. He was a bright child, sickly at first but later robust and athletic. His ability at sports helped him win a place in a Polish high school outside the ghetto; and it was there that he first ran into directly arbitrary authority (he remembers how he came first in his class but the marks of another student were bumped up so a Jew wouldn't win the prize). For the rest, he recalls being beaten up by gangs of Polish youths ("I ran away, it was the only thing to do").

The only bright spot of his later schooldays was the friendship that followed his meeting with Eva Rosenfarb, a literate and poetic girl whom Morgentaler, with his more practical mind, admired enormously. She was later to become his wife.

In 1939, the Germans were at the gates. Time for bright spots was over. His father was in hiding,